3:Westermann E-5 (1910) 1912 FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

323 mostly consisting of ring-shaped lines with dots in them. The pipe-stem is a
276 long, thick, hollow reed of about 1½—2 cm in diameter. The juncture be-
531 tween the stick and the head is tightly closed with a leather cover. On the upper end of the stick a small, oblong gourd with a pointed head is fastened; here again the juncture is made tight by a leather cover wrapped about it. Along the stick four or five strings are fastened, by which the pipe is carried; a long, pointed stick for cleaning the pipe is tied to the stem with a string. They are
276 exceedingly fond of smoking, both men and women. The smoking materials is a little tobacco and much charcoal. The pipe being rather heavy, they usually sit
[516] down, bowing their head deep over the pipe while smoking. When sitting in a circle they take only one or two draughts, and after that hand the pipe over to their neighbour. — Tobacco is not only smoked, but also chewed passionately; this habit is more common among women and girls than among men.

SMOKING AND CHEWING OF TOBACCO

756 In cases of sickness the doctor is called. His chief means of curing consists
758 in charms, but they also know some reasonable medicines, among which cutting stands in the first place; but although they inflict much pain, they often heal a sickness. — Sick people are nursed by their relatives with care; temporary residences are fixed for them by screening off a place in the yard.

463 Building houses, making fences, dressing skins, working neck supports, carving and polishing clubs and spear sticks, making ambach boats and other common work is understood by every Shilluk. The neck supports are "invented
352 by Nyikang." They are carved of wood, and are made to resemble the forms
[532] of animals, viz. of hippopotamus, giraffe, tiang, camel, ostrich and another bird, which seems to be an ibis. The Shilluks have no chairs or stools; old men sometimes sit on a piece of ambach wood, young people squat or lie on the ground.

NECK SUPPORTS

463 The craftsmen do not practise their trade with the exclusion of all other kind of work; each one of them cultivates his farm and tends his cattle, and only during the time there is no farm-work, he works at his craft.

438 There are villages which are renowned in practising certain crafts; some in fishing or hunting, some in cattle-breeding or cultivating dura, some in making pots or baskets, etc. As these goods are exchanged between the villages, a little
● [443] trade is going on; but in this trade among the natives no money is used, and it is practised only occasionally; they have no markets. The very little development of trade is illustrated by the expression used for it: *dgang*, which means "to sell" as well as "to buy"; all trade being done by barter, selling and buying are identical actions; the native cannot "buy" anything without at the same time
439 "selling" another thing; he exchanges one thing for another. In trading with
177 the Arab or Greek merchant they have, however, learnt the use of money;

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

about mid-October, and then the large heads of grain are cut off and stacked on tables to dry out before being loaded into baskets and carried off to the village by the women. The stalks are left standing in the fields to be collected when they are needed. For the time being, then, the Shilluk is contented, having plenty to eat and drink. If the harvest has not been too good, he still has enough food for the next six months, and beyond that he refuses to look. Why should he worry about next year when he might be dead by then? His wife, equally thriftless, will load her basket with the golden grain and set off to the nearest merchants, perhaps ten or fifteen miles away, to exchange it for a handful of piastres. She knows full well that before the next rains have even begun she will have to go back to the same merchant to buy back her grain at twice the price she was given for it, or watch her family struggle in semi-starvation for the remainder of the year, but that does not deter her from crossing the road from the grain store to the general store run by the same merchant and squandering her money on a few strings of beads, a few feet of copper wire, a small mirror or such other trifles.

In the new year, when the swamps and khors are draining back to the Nile and the tall grass is drying and yellowing under the fierce heat of the sun, it is time to think of re-building and re-thatching. A well-made house will stand the rigours of perhaps ten rainy seasons; a good thatched roof for two or three. After the roof has been renewed three times, the cracking and crumbling walls are beyond further patching up, and the house must be pulled down and rebuilt. Building is a community affair, and the builders are paid for their labour in beer, the brewing of large quantities of which is an essential preparation for the work.

If a new hut is to be built, a circle of about twelve feet in diameter is marked out on the ground and a shallow trench dug round the circumference. Stakes are driven into this every six inches, so that they stand four feet above the ground, and these are bound together by coarsely plaited grass ropes woven around and in and out from bottom to top.

29:Dempsey M-5 (1940-1954) 1955
FJ23 Shilluk FJ23

Chapter XIV

FAMINE AND FLOOD

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the majority of the Shilluk live in a state of chronic hunger. The poverty of the land they till, their primitive methods of husbandry, the elements which seem to fight against them in their annual struggle to raise a crop all contribute to make this so. And if despite all these handicaps, if perhaps in an occasional year the fates relent a little and send neither deluge nor drought, but a supply of rain liberal enough to nurture a plentiful field, then the weaver birds will descend in their millions to lay waste the great heads of mature but as yet unripened grain. The damage that these tiny predators can do is incredible. In the early dawn they swoop like a black cloud on the unprotected fields, settle and after a short time, rise again. But they leave behind them ruin; the heads of grain are in rags and tatters and the ground is carpeted green with the unripened grain. In three or four days the former flourishing field is laid waste.

Once, at daybreak, I saw a migration of weaver birds. They were flying up the Nile from north to south. I did not see the beginning of this great army, neither did I see the end, but for half an hour it flew in an unbroken mass which seemed to stretch across the entire breadth of the river and to be about a foot deep. Its passing boded ill for the luckless cultivators in the south.

Despite these misfortunes the Shilluk usually manage to garner something from their impoverished fields. From October and for the next few months they generally have sufficient to eat and after that, if they have money to buy it, grain imported from more prosperous parts of the country is available in the merchants' stores. But occasionally the whole country is stricken. The failure of the rains is